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County Sanitation Officials Settle Toxic Dumping Suit for \$12 Million

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The Los Angeles Sanitation Districts agreed Thursday to a \$12-million out-of-court settlement with state and federal authorities over the dumping of tons of toxic chemicals into Los Angeles coastal waters that began as far back as 40 years ago.

The settlement marked the first time federal and state governments have been able to collect damages under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, which makes parties that dispose of waste responsible for cleaning up and restoring the environment, officials connected with the case said.

"Today's settlement is an important environmental victory for the people of the state," Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy, a member of the State Lands Commission, said after an-

nouncing the decision. "We will not allow our oceans to be treated like sewers anymore. American people will no longer experience pollution for the sake of profit."

The settlement with the sanitation districts, a Los Angeles County agency, will not eliminate legal action against eight companies being sued by the government for allegedly inflicting damages to marine wildlife and its habitat off the Southern California coast.

Under the settlement guidelines, officials for the plaintiffs will have access to the sanitation districts' files documenting dumping by the eight companies being sued, said districts spokesman Bob Horvath.

The costs of the Sanitation Districts' settlement will be passed on to taxpayers in the form of a service charge increase, Horvath said. The charges, currently \$50 per year for a single-family home, will most likely increase a dollar a

year for the next six years, Horvath said.

The settlement, which was filed late Wednesday in federal court, follows a warning issued by the government in January that the

are highly toxic and cause birth defects in birds and marine life. The government alleges they were discharged into the Los Angeles-Long Beach harbors, the Palos Verdes Shelf off Whites Point and

Firms named in the suit include Montrose Chemical Corp. and its parent companies Atkemix 37 Inc., Stauffeur Management Co., ICI American Holdings and Chris-Craft Industries.

sanitation districts and several California companies could be held liable for environmental damage caused by the discharge of the pesticide DDT and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Scientists say the two chemicals

at two dump sites in the San Pedro Channel near Santa Catalina Island.

The sanitation districts agency was named in the lawsuit because it was held responsible for releasing through its sewer system the

toxic chemicals produced by the eight private companies and dumped into Los Angeles-Long Beach waters, said Thomas A. Campbell, general counsel for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the lead agency in the suit.

NOAA, the Interior Department and three California state agencies worked together on the settlement, Campbell said. The case was filed by the Justice Department.

The companies named in the suit include Montrose Chemical Corp. and its parent companies Atkemix 37 Inc., Stauffeur Management Co., ICI American Holdings and Chris-Craft Industries. They are charged with flushing hundreds of tons of DDTs into the storm drainage system of Los Angeles County and, ultimately, into the Pacific Ocean, Campbell said.

The suit also charges Westinghouse Electric Corp., Potlatch

Corp. and Simpson Paper Co. with similar activities involving PCBs, Campbell said.

Although the discharge of the chemicals occurred as long as 40 years ago, McCarthy said the effects can be seen today. The dumping made some local fish dangerous to eat and threatened the existence of wildlife such as the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon, McCarthy said.

Horvath said the settlement provided a way for the districts to address and improve pollution problems as well as the opportunity to shoulder responsibility for its actions.

Under terms of the deal, the districts will assist in assessing the extent of natural-resources damage and contribute to restoration of the natural resources once a restoration plan is approved. The districts value these services and contributions at over \$12 million.